



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA'S NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE TO HOST SEVERE WEATHER AND WILDFIRE AWARENESS WEEK IN PACIFIC NORTHWEST

NOAA's National Weather Service Forecast Offices in the Pacific Northwest will host the first region-wide Severe Weather and Wildfire Awareness Week from May 9-15, 2005. The effort is to raise public attention to the dangers of severe weather and wildfires in the Pacific Northwest and provide information to help protect life and property. NOAA is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"Education is key to a successful forecast and warning process and is the goal of this awareness week," said retired Brig. Gen. David L. Johnson, director of NOAA's National Weather Service. "When National Weather Service forecasters warn the public of severe weather or wildfire hazards, it's important for citizens to listen to emergency managers and know how to react in order to protect themselves and their property."

"Some people incorrectly believe that the Pacific Northwest does not get severe weather," said John Livingston, meteorologist-in-charge of NOAA's National Weather Service in Spokane, Wash. "Yet, history shows this region does get severe weather, including tornadoes, severe thunderstorms and flash floods."

"On April 6, 1972, an F3 tornado touched down in Vancouver, Washington just north of Portland, Oregon, said Steve Todd, Portland forecast office Meteorologist In Charge. "The tornado destroyed a grocery store, bowling center and school, killing six and injuring several hundred. Washington led the nation in tornado deaths that year."

"Flash floods are a significant concern in the region because of our rugged terrain," said Mike Vescio, Pendleton forecast office Meteorologist in Charge. "On June 14, 1903, the worst natural disaster in Oregon history occurred when a flash flood swept through Heppner destroying the town and claiming about 250 lives, the second worst flash flood fatality event in American history."

"Wildfires are a perennial hazard in the Pacific Northwest," added John Jannuzzi meteorologist-in-charge of NOAA's National Weather Service in Boise, Idaho. "With most of the Northwest in severe to extreme drought conditions, wildfires may be a significant hazard this summer and fall."

Topics to be covered online during the Pacific NW Severe Weather and Wildfire Awareness Week at <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/severeawareweek.php> include:

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Monday, May 9: Flood and Flash Flood Safety

The Pacific Northwest is coming out of one of its driest winters on record. Nonetheless in the midst of a drought, summer thunderstorms can still produce heavy rain and local flash flooding as the hardened ground cannot absorb the sudden downpours. Even in a drought, floods and flash floods can claim lives.

Tuesday, May 10: Tornadoes, Tornado Safety, Special Marine Warnings

Tornadoes are not limited to "Tornado Alley" in the central United States. Rather tornadoes and their ocean and lake equivalent, waterspouts, do occur in the Pacific Northwest and can lead to fatalities and property damage.

Wednesday, May 11: Wind, Hail, Lightning Safety

Thunderstorms produce many hazards including damaging winds, large hail and potentially deadly lightning. But there are safety measures that can be taken to decrease the odds of becoming a victim.

Thursday, May 12: Wildland Fire Awareness

Weather plays a large role in the ignition and spread of wildfires. Lightning from thunderstorms can ignite fires and gusty winds can help the fire spread. NOAA's National Weather Service work closely with land management agencies to help to suppress wildfires and keep firefighters safe.

Friday, May 13: Watch and Warning Program

NOAA's National Weather Service issues Outlooks, Watches and Warnings to alert the public when severe weather or dangerous wildfire conditions are expected. Outlooks and watches are issued for the potential of severe weather within the next few days or even hours. A warning is an urgent message that severe weather or potentially dangerous wildfire conditions are imminent or occurring.

Saturday, May 14: NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards Information

NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards provides immediate broadcasts of warnings and information pertaining to severe weather and civil emergencies. More than 90 percent of the population in the Pacific Northwest is within broadcast reception of NOAA Weather Radio. Receivers can be purchased online and at most electronic retailers.

NOAA's National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories. The NWS operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world, helping to protect lives and property and enhance the national economy.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA's National Weather Service: <http://www.weather.gov>

Severe Weather and Wildfire Awareness Week:

<http://www.wr.noaa.gov/pqr/severeawareweek.php>